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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT DELIVERS REAL, POSITIVE CHANGE FOR WOMEN THROUGH SKILLED TRADES PROGRAM

Ontario program first of its kind in Canada

BURLINGTON – The McGuinty government is building a strong, prosperous economy by investing in four institutions to train 78 women for well-paying jobs in the skilled trades, Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues announced today.

"The Ontario government is committed to promoting women's economic independence," said Pupatello. "Training women in the skilled trades equips them to achieve financial security and helps to address Ontario's skills shortages in this sector. By supporting training programs like WIST, we are creating better workers for better jobs in an innovative economy."

Ontario's unique Women in Skilled Trades (WIST) program will be offered this year through Burlington's The Centre for Skills Development and Training, Conestoga College in Guelph, Confederation College in Thunder Bay and Georgian College in Barrie.

WIST targets disadvantaged women, particularly unemployed and underemployed young women, many of them single parents. Burlington's The Centre for Skills Development and Training will receive $169,919 for its New Home Service Technician and Enhanced General Carpentry program.

Minister Pupatello made the announcement at Burlington's The Centre for Skills Development and Training in celebration of International Women's Week in Ontario. The 2004 theme is She's on a Role, providing an opportunity to focus on women's accomplishments and the importance of women role models in advancing women's economic independence and equality.

"Women are a key resource in meeting Canada's skills shortages in sectors where they have been under-represented," said Pupatello. "Graduates of the WIST program have proven that women can master the skilled trades and they are helping to break down the barriers for others."

The WIST program is the first of its kind in Canada. It offers a pre-apprenticeship training program exclusively for women, that involves in-school theoretical training followed by a paid work placement at an employer's work site. So far, 492 women have enrolled in WIST training since the program started in 1999. An estimated 75 per cent of graduates find employment.

"By helping women achieve economic independence, we are building strong, vital communities and providing Ontarians with a quality of life second to none," said Pupatello.

- 30 -

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TOP

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